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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8953
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3556
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9769
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4172
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0048
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2055
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7247
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0724
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3779
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0152
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0064
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0119
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 002162

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN, INL (A. BUHLER), EXBS (J. HARTSHORN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/13/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: HIGH-LEVEL GOU ATTENDANCE AT BORDER SECURITY
PROJECT CEREMONY IN TERMEZ, UZBEKISTAN

Classified By: Poloffs Steven Prohaska and Timothy Buckley for reasons
1.4 (b, d).

11. (U) Summary: On December 18, representatives of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Government of Uzbekistan (GOU), American and British Embassies, and the Asian Development Bank took part in a border project dedication ceremony at Hayraton checkpoint on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border. High-level GOU officials, including the Chairman of the State Committee for Border Protection and Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee, participated in the ceremony. Both of these officials and a representative of UNODC expressed interest in further collaboration to counter threats to border security. Hayraton appears to be a relatively advanced and well-maintained checkpoint. End summary.

12. (U) Representatives of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), GOU, American and British Embassies, and the Asian Development Bank took part in a border project dedication ceremony at Hayraton checkpoint on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border on December 18. Key donors included the United States, United Kingdom, Norway, and Finland. (Note: The United States funded roughly \$575,000 of the \$1,810,875 the project received. End note.) Representatives from the GOU included Chairman of the State Committee for Border Protection Ibragimov, Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee Mansurov, and Chief of Surkhandarya Customs Shavkat Muhammadiev, a higher level of representation than the UN initially expected.

13. (U) Deputy Chairman of the State Customs Committee Mansurov remarked in his speech that Hayraton is located on the main road connecting Central Asia to Afghanistan, and said that effective functioning of the checkpoint was important to security and trade. He lamented the 34 percent increase in opium production in Afghanistan relative to last year and the effect drug production has had on the countries of Central Asia. Counternarcotics is a priority for Customs, he continued. Mansurov said that Customs had collaborated with other law enforcement agencies to interdict twelve

shipments of drugs in 2007 and that Hayraton checkpoint was especially important to countersmuggling efforts. He expressed hope that the international community would continue to provide counternarcotics and counterproliferation assistance. Mansurov thanked in particular the United Kingdom, the United States, and UNODC for their valuable help, and hoped that there would be further collaboration in the future.

¶4. (U) Major-General Ibragimov, Chairman of the State Committee for Border Protection, then said in his speech that border protection was one of Uzbekistan's main goals. The Border Guards work jointly with Customs, he said, to counter terrorism and narcotics. Thanks to help from donors, Uzbekistan has received modern equipment, Ibragimov continued. Terrorism, drugs, and contraband are real threats, he said. Ibragimov again expressed his gratitude for the international assistance that was helping to make Central Asia safer.

¶5. (U) UNODC Regional Director Jim Callahan gave a speech in which he outlined three primary objectives of the Hayraton project: improving the infrastructure of the checkpoint; promoting cooperation and coordination among the agencies of the GOU; and promoting cross-border cooperation between Central Asia and Afghanistan through the installation of a fiber-optic cable line between them. Callahan said he hoped there would be further cooperation between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the future. More pressure on the borders between Central Asia and Afghanistan threatens both the transit destination countries, he warned. (Note: No Afghans were invited to the event. End note.) Callahan said that drug trafficking funds extremist groups, the drug trade

itself destabilizes governments in the region, and the problem of HIV/AIDS is linked to drug use. All of these concerns, he said, underscore the importance of continuing joint work to strengthen Uzbekistan's capabilities. UNODC looks forward to working with the authorities and donors on further projects, he said. Callahan then thanked the donor countries and the individual Customs and Border Guard officers responsible for protecting the border.

¶6. (SBU) GOU officials then provided a tour of the checkpoint. Several small offices are situated in the center of the checkpoint's ten lanes, and SUVs, forklifts, and a crane were located at one side. INL LES noted that vehicle search mirrors previously donated with USG assistance were being used to conduct inspections. At the section reserved for secondary inspections of suspicious cargo, GOU officials inspected crates of oranges shipped in from Pakistan. (Comment: The ability to ship such goods by ground through Afghanistan represents a major change in the past few years, resulting in greater consumer choice and lower prices on citrus during the winter months in Uzbekistan's bazaars. End comment.) Local authorities showed the visitors a backup generator, a room with communications equipment linked to Tashkent, and another room with television monitors connected to the checkpoint's network of 57 cameras. Not all of the equipment Poloffs observed was fully functional. There are some problems with the scales and data retrieval (see septel).

¶7. (C) Comment: The GOU's surprisingly high-level representation at this project closure ceremony--both Ibragimov and Mansurov flew in from Tashkent to participate in the ceremony--probably reflects the importance Tashkent attaches to border security cooperation, and could bode well for future cooperation in this sphere. Hayraton struck Poloffs as being overall an advanced and well-maintained checkpoint with modern equipment. Some observers consider the Hayraton checkpoint the best-equipped and maintained land POE in Uzbekistan, if not Central Asia.

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